



WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2014 PHOTO COMPETITION

Neil Jernigan's excitement in learning he won the overall prize for the 2014 *Wildlife in North Carolina Photo Contest* was palpable even via email: "I'm speechless! Thank you so much! You have no idea how much this means to me!"

But, this is not the first time for Jernigan. He won the Youth 13–17 category in 2008. "That sort of started a fire in me," he said. "I've entered every year but one since then."

Jernigan, 23, has been shooting "seriously" for about seven years and does wedding and portrait photography when not traipsing about the backwoods of North Carolina photographing wildlife or working part time in a Greenville photography store. He caught the camera bug early, as he and his father would photograph and video their hunts together. He's an avid outdoorsman and counts deer hunting and fishing for striped bass among his passions. He graduated from Lenoir Community College in 2010.

His winning photo is a great example of maximizing an unplanned opportunity. He and a friend were at Lake Mattamuskeet scouting areas to use for a photography workshop.

"When we pulled up I saw the egret about 100 yards away and I saw the reflection," he said. "I switched from evaluative to spot metering and metered off the white feathers. He was standing in the only sunlight in the canal."

Marsha Tillett, the art director at *Wildlife in North Carolina*, commented on this year's offerings, including Jernigan's Grand Prize winner. "As we have come to expect, this year's competition was filled with many wonderful images of our state and wildlife," she said. "The image we chose to be the grand prize winner stood out because it was such a peaceful image and so beautifully lit. The composition of the egret and the mirrored silhouette came together to create a beautiful image, and the negative space accentuated the lovely angles of the bird."

This was the third year the competition was open only to subscribers (for adults), and several top pictures were disqualified for this reason. We had a little over 1,200 entries broken down as follows: Birds, 222; Animal Behavior, 136; Invertebrates, 157; Mammals, 135; Outdoor Recreation, 97; Reptiles and Amphibians, 113; Wild Landscapes, 181; Wild Plants, 117; Youth 12 and Under, 12; and Youth 13–17, 49.

The other four judges for this year's contest were staff graphic designers Amy Friend and Bryant Cole and staff photographer Melissa McGaw. Mike Dunn, retired senior manager of outreach at the N.C. Museum of Natural History, was also a judge. All winning photographs may be seen on exhibit through March at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh and on our website at ncwildlife.org.

–Mike Zlotnicki

GRAND PRIZE WILDLIFE IN NORTH CAROLINA 2014 PHOTO COMPETITION



Neil Jernigan, Snow Hill

Great egret, Lake Mattamuskeet

While searching for wildlife to photograph at Lake Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge, I came across this great egret. It was on the edge of a canal feeding on small fish. I immediately noticed its perfect mirrored reflection. I switched my camera to spot metering and metered off its white feathers. With the egret being lit by the sun along with the shaded area behind, I was able to get a high enough shutter speed to basically cancel out the foreground and background, allowing only the egret and its reflection to show.

(Canon 5D Mark III, Canon 500mm f/4 IS II, ISO 100, f/4, 1/1000 of a second)



BIRDS FIRST PLACE

Charles English, Wilmington

White egret, Wilmington

I was out at Airlie Gardens in the afternoon in May trying to get some nice egret shots, and noticed some of the birds were carrying moss from trees on one side of the lake to the opposite side. I started shooting as they landed and shot about 150 frames in about a 20-minute period. This one was the one I was after with the wings out and the feet at different angles right before touch down. The image looked very graceful.

(Canon 1D Mark IV, 500mm f/4 with a 1.4x, ISO 800, f/6.3, 1/3200 of a second, manual mode)

BIRDS SECOND PLACE

Catherine McEntee, Rock Hill, S.C.

Cedar waxwing, Hampstead

A flock of cedar waxwings were in my yard in the morning feasting on holly berries in the front yard. I got my camera and got a few images. During the late afternoon however, the flock had returned and were in my neighbor's trees and helping themselves to a drink from my bird bath. I got my camera out again and saw this cedar waxwing on a branch of berries I put by my bird feeders the week before hoping to get some nice cardinal photos. Next thing I know this cedar waxwing was throwing back a bunch of berries and I got the shot.

(Nikon D7100, Nikon 500mm f/4, ISO 1600, f/5.6, 1/640 of a second, Nikon SB900 used as fill flash)



BIRDS THIRD PLACE

Colin Knight, Rock Hill, S.C.

Snowy owl, Ocracoke

I made several trips up and down the East Coast trying to find the best place to photograph last year's rare Southern snowy owl migration. The Outer Banks proved to be the best location and I made several visits. This image was taken on the first visit. A sharply receding shoreline provided a nice pool of water between the bird and myself, which made her feel secure enough for me to move in, take the photograph and move out without flushing.

(Canon 1Dx, 500mm +2.0xTC for a 1000mm focal length, ISO 800, f/10, 1/2000 of a second)





MAMMALS FIRST PLACE

Charles English, Wilmington

Red fox, Wilmington

I was out early that morning hoping to get some good shots of the fox kits. As I looked around I saw the adult sitting about 40 yards from me. When I looked through the viewfinder I saw how well she was lit with her head turned. With the incoming light reflecting off the trees and just a touch of purple from one of the azaleas, it looked like a keeper.

(Canon 1Dx, 500f4 II, ISO 800, f/4, 1/250 of a second)

MAMMALS SECOND PLACE

Neva Scheve, West End

Twin fawns, West End

My tractor was out of commission, so my horse pasture had gotten overgrown. One July morning while feeding my horses, I threw out a bucket of water and two fawns jumped up and ran away from about 30 feet away from my barn. I was afraid I had frightened them away, and the mother wouldn't be able to find them. Two mornings later, I saw their little ears peeking up from the grass. I ran to the house for my camera and sneaked up as close as I could without spooking them. One was very curious and watched me as I clicked away. For the entire month of July, they were there every morning, giving me many more opportunities to photograph them.

(Nikon D800, Tamron 200–500mm lens at 500mm, ISO 1000, f/9, 1/800 of a second)



MAMMALS THIRD PLACE

Kim Wilhite, Paoli, Indiana

Wild horse, Carrot Island

Having always had a love of horses and the beach, discovering the wild horses at the Outer Banks was very exciting! My first trip was in 2012, and I have returned each year since. This particular afternoon was spent observing about a dozen horses at a watering hole. Not much activity or opportunity for action shots. Just heads down and drinking. This stallion had started wandering off into the tall grass. He stopped, turned around and stared at me for a few moments. The sun was setting and it framed him beautifully. It was worth the wait.

(Canon 5D Mark III, Canon 100–400mm f4.5–5.6L IS USM at 400mm, ISO 1000, f/8, 1/640 of a second, Induro INCT314 Carbon 8X CT314 Tripod, Really Right Stuff: BH-40 LR: mid-sized ballhead)





REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS FIRST PLACE

Patti White, Bear Creek
Bullfrog, Bear Creek

This image was shot lying in a big mud puddle with a bullfrog, trying my best to keep a Nikon D7000 and a Nikon 70–200 lens out of the water. It was a little messy but worth the extra effort.

(Nikon D7000, Nikon 70–200mm at 200mm, ISO 400, f/4, 1/320 of a second)

**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS
SECOND PLACE**

Catherine McEntee, Rock Hill, S.C.
American anole, Hampstead

I was on my deck and noticed this American anole had jump onto my banana plant. I grabbed my camera from inside the house and slowly walked toward the anole. I squatted down and aimed the camera up to get a different perspective. The anole was surprisingly very cooperative and turned out to be quite photogenic!

(Nikon D7100, Sigma 150mm macro, ISO 800, f/8, 1/500 of a second)



**REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS
THIRD PLACE**

Ed Ziegler, Raleigh
American anole, Raleigh

One of my favorite shooting locations is Durant Nature Preserve. Near the lake one can find an area simply known as the “bog.” It offers opportunities during the summer months to photograph varied types of insects and other critters. Maintaining a combination of patience, and a watchful eye will occasionally yield unsuspected surprises. A slight movement in a bush captured my attention. It was a grand surprise. My first anole. It was anything but timid, and seemed to be pleased to have some company nearby. It posed nearly an hour for me before disappearing in the thick underbrush.

(Canon EOS 1D Mark IV, Canon EF300mm f/4L IS USM with 1.4 extender (420mm focal length), ISO 400, f/5.6, 1/400 of a second)





INVERTEBRATES FIRST PLACE

Frank Ellison, Clemmons

Assassin fly, Clemmons

I found this assassin fly on the sidewalk by my car as we were on the way to a ballgame. I jumped out of the car, opened my trunk and grabbed my camera. I fired a few shots and he was gone. It was less than two minutes from the time I saw him until he left. Always have a camera ready — you never know what will show up. And remember, never kill one of these flies because they kill other bigger flies that bite.

(Nikon D700, 60mm/2.8 lens, ISO 200, f/16, 1/60 of a second, front curtain flash mode)



INVERTEBRATES SECOND PLACE

Dan Mele, Asheville

Horse fly, Cedar Mountain

Early morning hiking through DuPont State Forest on the edge of the trail I spotted a female Tabanidae on a stick that fit perfectly as if it were a stage. I shot the fly from multiple different angles, and found the hardest part was focusing on the dew droplets to properly expose them. I've gained a greater appreciation for horse flies and deer flies through this experience.

(Canon 5D Mark III, Canon EF 100mm 2.8L IS USM Macro, ISO 800, f/16, 2.0 seconds, Manfrotto tripod)



INVERTEBRATES THIRD PLACE

Skip Sickler, Newland

Butterfly on flower, Grandfather Mountain

This image was captured in the butterfly garden on Grandfather Mountain during the August 2013 Camera Clinic, an annual workshop established by Hugh Morton in 1952. The original image was a shot of the entire butterfly and surrounding flowers. I was particularly drawn to the symmetry and geometric patterns of the wings. Wanting to draw the viewer's attention to this detail, I cropped tight, using a panoramic aspect.

(Nikon D3s, Sigma 150mm f2.8 macro, ISO 800; f/4, 1/1250 of a second, EV: -1/3: Aperture Priority)



WILD PLANTS FIRST PLACE

Daniel Beauvais, Kitty Hawk

Tuft of grass, Wanchese

A friend and I inspire each other by going out together to make photographs early each Friday morning. Bundled against the January cold, I found this tuft of grass in the pond as we explored Roanoke Island Marshes Game Land, near Wanchese. The still water reflected the colors of the clouds and sky, moments after sunrise.

(Nikon D800, Nikon 28–300mm f/3.5–5.6 lens at 200mm, ISO 100, f/16, 1/10 of a second, tripod mounted)

**WILD PLANTS
SECOND PLACE**

Dennis Hacker, Hickory

Fungi, Blowing Rock

“Golden Ears” is a back-lit fungi image taken at Hickory Ridge Living History Museum in Blowing Rock. Light has really been the subject of many of my favorite images. It surely was light that attracted my eye with this image. The fungi were on a log leaning against an old building giving the sun a perfect chance to provide back lighting. We were on a field trip with the Catawba Valley Camera Club.

(Canon G11, 24mm, ISO 100, f/8, 1/40 of a second with tripod)



**WILD PLANTS
THIRD PLACE**

Matt Williams, Raleigh

Mimosa flowers, Raleigh

The vibrant flowers of a mimosa tree have always been a favorite of mine. I came across this one on an afternoon walk and noticed the branches were low enough to take some macro shots. The late afternoon lighting was perfect, highlighting this single bud starting to bloom. I used a fully-bloomed flower as the backdrop that was also illuminated by the afternoon sun. I chose to use a shallow depth of field to make the subject stand out against the vibrant background while also including a few stamen tips from the flower behind it for added interest.

(Nikon D90, Nikon 55mm AIS 2.8 macro lens, ISO 250, f/2.8, 1/500th of a second)





OUTDOOR RECREATION FIRST PLACE

Ashley Morrison, Little River, S.C.

Kayakers, Sunset Beach

Without a doubt the North Carolina Intracoastal Waterway is one of my favorite subjects to shoot. Simple, peaceful, elegant and vast. On a warm June late afternoon I decided to make the short trip to Sunset Beach from my home in Little River, S.C. Walking up the Mannon C. Gore Bridge I watched as the kayakers paddled through the coastal marshes. With the sun beginning to set, I reached the peak of the bridge and realized I could also capture a glimpse of North Myrtle Beach in the distance. I chose to convert the picture, not only because I really prefer black & white, but because it just seemed to fit this photo much better.

(Nikon D3200, 175mm, ISO 400, f/4.9, 1/200 of a second)

**OUTDOOR RECREATION
SECOND PLACE**

Daniel Beauvais, Kitty Hawk

Kite flyer, Nags Head

On the Saturday after Thanksgiving, the staff of a local kite store fastens generator-powered holiday lights to kites and sends them soaring for the annual Kites with Lights festival atop Jockey's Ridge, the East Coast's largest sand dune, in Nags Head. Minutes before sunset, a young man prepared to launch his American flag-themed kite. I was struck by the color intensity of the back-lit kite. I got five shots in two seconds, then the opportunity was gone.

(Nikon D300, Nikon 18–200 f/3.5–5.6 lens at 135mm, ISO 200, f/16, 1/200 of a second)



**OUTDOOR RECREATION
THIRD PLACE**

Ed Ziegler, Raleigh

Sunrise surf fishing, Emerald Isle

Spending time at a North Carolina beach during the month of September has become an annual event for me. Dawn always seems to reveal a number of early risers scattered along the shore enjoying the sport of surf fishing. On this particular morning a combination of a beautiful sky, a lighted pier and a very still subject provided me with an opportunity to capture this 5-second exposure which in turn created the silky appearance of the rushing sea.

(Canon EOS-1D Mark IV, Canon EF 70–200 f/2.8L IS II USM with 1.4 extender (280mm) ISO 200, f/8, 5-second exposure)





WILD LANDSCAPES FIRST PLACE

Paul Malcolm, Garner

Fog in trees, Blue Ridge Parkway

This picture was taken on July 26 of last year. I was staying at my daughter's house near Asheville and awoke to a foggy morning. I have finally learned that waking up to fog is one of the best reasons to drive up the Blue Ridge Parkway. I got a nice sunrise shot and moved on down the parkway to Pounding Mill Overlook. There is often fog in the valleys around there, but that day the early light of the sun cast interesting shadows in the fog. I wanted a close-up of this and zoomed out to 350mm with my telephoto lens. I had shot similar pictures to this, but I think on this day the diagonal shadows in the fog created something special.

(Canon 5D Mark III, Canon EF 100–400mm f/4.5–5.6 L IS lens 350mm, ISO 100, f/22, 1/40 of a second, Benro Tripod with Acratech Ballhead)

WILD LANDSCAPES SECOND PLACE

Dwayne McDowell, Mill Spring

Lightning, Mill Spring

I love to shoot lightning pictures. On July 7 after church I could hear it thundering in the distance. So I grabbed my gear and went to the end of Aden Green Road. From there you have clear views toward Black Mountain and Marion.

(Canon 5D Mark III, Canon 24–105 mm F4L lens at 24mm, ISO 400, f/8, 6 second exposure)



WILD LANDSCAPES THIRD PLACE

Wick Smith, Fayetteville

Rime ice on trees, Grandfather Mountain

In mid-October 2009, there was a bit of fall color left in the higher altitudes around Grandfather Mountain. I could see rime ice forming on the peak so I entered the main gate in hopes of getting to the top for a unique photo or two. They had closed off the road above the visitor center due to the ice. I got this photo from Linville Bluffs. The remaining fall color and the rime ice forming on the bare trees was a unique sight to see.

(Canon 5D II, 24–105mm at 24mm, ISO 640, f/11, 1/320 of a second)





ANIMAL BEHAVIOR FIRST PLACE

Alan Clark, Raleigh
Towhee, Raleigh

Towhees are a favorite subject, particularly the males, which resemble miniature roosters when calling. I happened to be shooting birds in my back yard when this male landed nearby and started “crowing.”

(Nikon D7100, Nikon 500mm AFS-II f/4 lens and Nikon 1.7x teleconverter (850mm digital focal length), ISO 1600, f/6.7, 1/80 of a second, Gitzo tripod with a Wimberly sidekick and Acratech ballhead)



ANIMAL BEHAVIOR SECOND PLACE

Gene Furr, Raleigh
Brown pelican, Kure Beach

I was at Kure Beach searching for pelicans when I saw a pelican dive into the water and catch a fish. After he caught the fish he flew up to the pier and landed. I was close to where he landed therefore decided to do a portrait when at once he open his beak and threw a fish up in the air and caught it when it came down. It was being in the right place at the right time, plus some luck.

(Nikon D4, Nikon 70–200mm/2.8 zoom with a 1.4 extender, ISO 800, f/8, 1/4000 of a second)

ANIMAL BEHAVIOR THIRD PLACE

Skip Sickler, Newland
Red-winged blackbirds, Pungo Lake

This image was captured in mid-January 2014 during a trip to Lake Mattamuskeet and Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. The objective was to photograph the large concentration of waterfowl and shorebirds present during the winter months. While photographing the snow geese and tundra swans on Pungo Lake one cold sunrise, this large flock of red-winged blackbirds flew toward our viewing station. I especially liked the mix of focused and unfocused birds and their various flight silhouettes.

(Nikon D3s, Nikon 400mm f/2.8, ISO 6400; f/2.8, 1/1600 of a second, aperture priority)





YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13-17
FIRST PLACE

Jacob Thomas, Waxhaw
Honeybee, Waxhaw

I was taking a stroll outside when I came across this busy little fellow. Right away I was struck by the marvelous texture of pollen coating his body. I just knew I had to get a shot of this little dude. I followed him as he went from flower to flower until I finally captured this picture of him.

(Nikon D5200, Nikon 55-300mm VR lens at 300mm, ISO 900, f/5.6, 1/500 of a second)

YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13-17
SECOND PLACE

Lily Hart, Sunbury, Ohio
Foothills setting, Franklin

I absolutely adore the mountains and photography, so I saw our family vacation to North Carolina as an incredible photo-op. When we go on vacation to North Carolina, we often visit Cherokee Mine to look for gems. I got particularly bored with it so I took a walk down the road to find this perfect view. I had to capture it.

(Nikon D5100, AF-S DX Nikkor 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6G VR, ISO 200, f/5.6, 1/125 of a second)



YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13-17
THIRD PLACE

Brandon Bailey, Browns Summit
Hummingbird, Browns Summit

I took this one evening this past summer sitting on the back porch. This hummingbird was flying around a feeder and she hovered in place for a few seconds, allowing me to get a shot at her, as she was flying off. As is their tendency, she didn't stay around for a second shot but instead flew off and returned later when in need of more sustenance.

(Nikon D5100, 280mm, ISO 400, f/8, 1/200 of a second)





**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17
HONORABLE MENTION**

Anwasha Nandi, Chapel Hill
Eastern daisy fleabanes, Chapel Hill

There's a trail behind my house that is overgrown with Eastern daisy fleabanes. When I saw them, they reminded me of spring. Although I saw these flowers all the time, I felt an impulse to take a picture. I got my camera and got as close as I could to the petals and tried my best to capture the feeling of revival and renewal that I get every time I see them.

(Sony Cybershot DSCW55, 6.3mm, ISO 100, f/2.8, 1/200 of a second)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17
HONORABLE MENTION**

Lelan Yung, Cary
Pier at sunrise, Wrightsville Beach

I walked along the beach on a peaceful morning near the end of summer, seeing if I could get a good photo. As the sun lazily started to rise, I set up my gear behind a pier for a subject. After a few tries with an extremely lagging shutter, I finally got a decent shot. I feel like the beaches were the best place to get pictures in North Carolina, as it is one of the state's most popular tourist attractions.

(Nikon D5000, Nikkor 18–55, ISO 200, f/29, 3 second exposure)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 13–17
HONORABLE MENTION**

Cailin Lucero, Hillsborough
Clematis, Hillsborough

I took the photo in June of 2012. I noticed that it was a beautiful day outside, and I did not want to waste the day by sitting on the couch and watching television. Off of our back deck, there are stairs leading into the back yard. At the base of those stairs, my mom had planted a clematis flower that had started wrapping around the railing. Intrigued by the bright and beautiful bloom, I took several photos with different angles.

(Canon EOS Digital Rebel, Canon EFS 18–55mm, at 55mm, ISO 100, f/5.6, 1/200 of a second)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER
FIRST PLACE**

Austin Ellison, Clemmons
Shrimp, Sunset Beach

When this picture was taken my dad and I were at Sunset Beach. I thought of this picture when all that we caught was one little shrimp. We took a break, put him up on a pole and took his picture. It was a fun day with my dad.

(Canon Powershot G11, 6mm, ISO 160, f/4, 1/1000 of a second)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER
SECOND PLACE**

Katie Davis, Asheville
Kayakers, Bryson City

My family had been rafting on the Nantahala River in Bryson City that day, and it was my first time rafting. After we finished rafting, we watched kayakers practicing skills. At the Nantahala Rafting Center, which is the end of the rafting trip, there is a concrete overlook that gives people a great way to watch the kayakers. I took the photo because it was a good perspective to view the kayakers, and I thought it was really cool that they could do all those tricks.

(Fuji FinePix E550, 7mm, ISO 100, f/2.8, 1/125 of a second)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER
THIRD PLACE**

Wylie Fenton, Havelock
Cicada, Havelock

I have always loved listening to cicadas during the summer nights. They can get so loud. Remember the cicada event of 2013? I wish I had gotten a chance to see them in my area. I saw hundreds of vacant cicada shells on an old oak tree a couple of summers ago, but never a live cicada during its molt. In June, I walked outside to let my dog out before bed and there it was stuck to the pole on our porch. It had just begun to stick its little head out of the hard, brown shell. I took lots of pictures that night because it was one of the coolest things I had ever seen. Little did I know that it is very rare to witness a molting cicada from beginning to end. Who knew that a regular, loud insect could be this neat!

(Nikon D40, Nikon 18–55mm lens at 55mm, ISO 200, f/5.6, 1/125 of a second)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER
HONORABLE MENTION**

Seth Finch, Rutherfordton
Honeybee, Rutherfordton

My brother is a beekeeper and we love bees. I wanted to see closely how our bees collect pollen. So I searched for a bee on the oak leaf hydrangea. I followed many bees during the afternoon until this bee landed in the ideal spot. I experimented with settings before photographing this bee with a large amount of pollen on her pollen baskets.

(Canon Powershot SX260 HS, 6.73mm, ISO 100, f/4, 1/160 of a second)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER
HONORABLE MENTION**

Elena Gorena, Clayton
Wild horse, Corolla

I love horses, so last summer we went driving on the beach in Corolla hoping to see some wild horses. To our surprise, we immediately saw a herd of four wild horses grazing right on top of the dune. This was one of the beautiful mares that I enjoyed watching as she walked, grazed and rested with her herd.

(Nikon D7000, Nikon AF-S DX 18–200mm, ISO 200, f/7.1, 1/800 of a second)



**YOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER 12 & UNDER
HONORABLE MENTION**

William Daughety, Edenton
Mockingbird chicks, Edenton

This photo was taken in the plum tree in our front yard where we had been watching a mockingbird sitting on her nest of eggs. When a friend came to pick plums she heard the babies and could see them open their mouths. I stood on a ladder and took pictures of the babies who thought we were the mama bird coming to feed them.

(Sony DSC-W330, 5mm, ISO 400, f/2.7, 1/100 of a second)